

NATIONAL PLATFORM FOR INTEGRATION OF ROMA IN SERBIA 2017

13 June 2017, Belgrade

:: RECOMMENDATIONS ::

The Roma Integration 2020 project is implemented by the Regional Cooperation Council and funded by the European Union and the Open Society Foundation. It aims at contributing to the reduction of the socio-economic gaps between Roma and non-Roma and strengthening the institutional obligation of the enlargement governments to integrate Roma. One of the key activities of the project is the National Platforms on Roma Integration organized jointly with the National Roma Contact Points of the partner governments in each enlargement economy. The National Platforms provide wide public dialogue with the relevant institutions, civil society, media, and others concerned with the issue of Roma integration, at the same time ensuring transparency of the Roma integration policy, participation in the decision making process and accountability of the implementing institutions towards the public.

The second National Platform in Serbia was held on 13 June 2017 in the main Government building Palace of Serbia, with over 60 participants, including relevant officials from the line ministries and other institutions, Roma and pro-Roma civil society organizations, representatives of international organizations and media. The representatives of the institutions presented the [2016 annual report on the implementation of the Roma integration policy in Serbia](#), followed by the [civil society view on the issue](#). This paper reflects the discussions at the National Platform and highlights the recommendations emerging from the discussions towards the institutions, with a view to contribute to more effective and efficient implementation of the Roma integration policy in Serbia.

The National Platform on Roma Integration 2017 in Serbia was organized by priority areas: education, employment, housing, health and social care. Throughout the discussions certain cross-cutting issues were raised and recommendations were made as follows:

- Noting the increased number of incidents of hate crime / speech against Roma, concrete measures towards the mainstream society to increase tolerance and understanding, at the same time discouraging prejudice, discrimination and hate crimes have to be put in place and strengthened where such exist, particularly in the area of education.
- The institutional setting of Serbia as precondition to implement the [National Roma Integration Strategy](#) adopted in March 2016 has been completed with the designation of the Vice Prime Minister as the officer in chief on Roma issues, the establishment of the high-level [National Coordination Body and its supporting expert group](#), and the adoption of the biennial [Action Plan 2017-18](#) containing implementing details including budget. While these positive developments are commendable, the delay in their implementation should be noted as a lesson learned.
- The Government of Republic of Serbia is commended for the cooperation in organizing the National Platform on Roma Integration and is encouraged to continue and institutionalize this practice on its path to EU integration.
- Relevant stakeholders that shall participate at the Roma Seminar organized by the European Commission and the Government of Serbia in October 2017 are encouraged to take into account all the recommendations emerging from the National Platform on Roma Integration in the formulation of the Operational Conclusions for the following two years. At the same time, responsible institutions are instructed to prepare concise and focused reports referring directly to the expectations expressed within the operational conclusions and covering the reporting period. For those conclusions not (fully) implemented, substantial reasons should be provided and amendments to the plans with a view to achieve the expected results should be proposed.
- The Government of Republic of Serbia is encouraged to work further with the Roma Integration 2020 Action Team towards setting up unique monitoring mechanism on Roma integration at national and regional level, to feed into the various reporting requirements and to further align this process with the EU practices.
- Local self-government units should be engaged in the implementation of the strategy for the integration of Roma in Serbia under the leadership, guidance and support by the central Government.



- The Government of Serbia is encouraged to make sure that the EU funds committed to the integration of Roma from the national IPA funds are adequately planned, negotiated and absorbed for the implementation of the Roma integration strategy and for the benefit of the Roma community. The country has good examples on this issue to build on.
- Throughout the process of the formulation, implementation and monitoring of the strategy for the integration of Roma, the Government of Serbia needs to maintain meaningful cooperation and coordination among its institutions and with independent institutions, local governments, civil society and international organizations.
- The work of the Government on detailed assessment for the fundraising needs to cover the budgeting gap of the Action Plan should be pursued further, with a view to complete the assessment and produce concrete fundraising document based on the Action Plan before the donor conference in September 2017 organized within the Roma Integration 2020.
- The existing data base collecting local level data on the actions towards integration of Roma should be further strengthened to reflect all the measures from the Strategy and the Action Plan, including impact assessment and possibility for analysis.
- Central and local level institutions dealing with Roma issues have to employ Roma professionals. Furthermore, existing local level mechanisms for implementation and monitoring, primarily the local coordinators, teaching assistants, health mediators and mobile teams should be further supported, strengthened and institutionalized, and extended to social care centres and local employment offices.
- Where the Roma integration policy relies on mainstream public services that regularly exclude Roma, deliberate effort to ensure access of Roma must be incorporated. Auxiliary measures, such as teaching assistants in education or health mediators in health, ensuring Roma access to mainstream public services should be applied in all other areas (including employment, housing and social care). Data on public services disaggregated by ethnicity should be collected.
- Re-establish working groups by priority area at each responsible ministry with the participation of adequate civil society organizations and experts that know and understand the situation of Roma and can offer concrete solutions.
- Stop adopting new documents and start implementing the existing ones meaningfully with tangible results on the ground.
- Monitor and report on the changes in the lives of Roma in line with the EU practices, using the impact indicators by meaningfully involving the State Statistical Agency by a Government decision.

EDUCATION

- The government is encouraged to keep up the good work in education that is the most successful area in the Roma integration policy. At the same time, there is a need to move gradually from project based towards institutional solutions of the problems.
- Wherever relevant and possible, Roma professionals should be engaged to deal with issues of interest of Roma in education, and in particular for the overseeing the education of Romani language and culture.
- The effect of indirect discrimination towards Roma of the criterion for priority enrolment into preschool of children with two employed parents should be removed, including within the World Bank credited project.
- Before the implementation of the World Bank credited project for inclusion of Roma into preschool education starts, it is recommended that a meeting with a wide range of relevant stakeholders is organized in order to discuss and address the open issues. Furthermore, it is recommended that Roma participate in the governing board of the project.
- The segregation of Roma at a number of schools resulting from the 2008 enrolment rule has to be resolved at the level of Ministry with a view to both dismantle the results of the indirectly discriminatory rule and to prevent further practices resulting in segregation of Roma.





- The rules of procedure and criteria for benefiting from the enrolment in education by affirmative measure urgently need to be revised with a view to ensure that Roma are benefiting from the measure and non-Roma are prevented from abusing it. The technical slip in the rules of procedure about the Office for Human and Minority Rights still being responsible for the measure should be corrected.
- Scholarships should be gradually provided from the state budget (instead of donors) with an objective to supply all (1600 for 2016) Roma students with scholarships until full equality is achieved, as committed by the Minister. Mentor teachers paid by the state budget should not outnumber the scholarships for students.
- Scholarships for university students, along with the accompanying benefits, should be provided to all the 300 Roma university students.

EMPLOYMENT

- A working group within the National Employment Agency on the issue of employment of Roma with participation of Roma civil society should be established as soon as possible and Roma (at least 1) should be involved in the governing board of the National Employment Agency, with an objective to tackle the issue of employment of Roma seriously.
- Resolute and effective measures leading to actual sustainable employment of Roma have to be planned, implemented and monitored as a matter of urgency, while participation of Roma in the employability measures has to be increased to the level of significance relative to the number of unemployed Roma.
- The Roma civil society demands that a National Employment Agency for Roma is established as a separate institution to deal with the unemployment of Roma.
- The government is strongly encouraged to act upon its legal obligation for proportional representation of Roma in the public sector and to pursue to achieve the goal of 2% Roma among the public servants, including in the areas of health, judiciary, police, local administration, and other areas of importance to Roma, particularly in the social care centres and the local employment offices.
- Secondary goods collectors, as an entry point of the recycling industry, should be systematically supported.
- The Law on Social Entrepreneurship to be considered and adopted with a view to benefit Roma.
- Meaningful and effective measures against discrimination in the labour market should be put in place, involving all the relevant institutions dealing with discrimination and/or labour market, as well as the Roma civil society.

HEALTH

- The Ministry of Health should comply with its obligations as planned or provide substantial arguments for failing to implement the plan in order to discuss their mitigation. Its reports should focus on the expected results, covering the reporting year and all the planned measures.
- The systematization of the Roma health mediators within the centrally managed public health system should be addressed as a matter of urgency in an inter-disciplinary manner by the National Coordination Body.

HOUSING

- In the area of housing the government should move from plans and regulations towards actual implementation, gradually replacing donors' with public funding.
- Housing interventions has to be combined with social and economic interventions and ensure sustainability.

